

**DECISION RECORD
and
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

I. Decision:

Based on the analysis and evaluation in the Environmental Assessment for Reindeer Grazing Permits on the Seward Peninsula, it is my decision to select the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action would reauthorize six Bureau of Land Management issued reindeer grazing permits and concur with the Alaska Department of Natural Resource re-issuance of five reindeer grazing permits for the remainder of 2008. All permit stipulations and conditions are to be the same as in the previous authorizations.

Bureau of Land Management issued permits:

<u>Applicant</u>	<u>Case File Number</u>
Gray	FF024210
Henry	F030387
Menadelook	FF085288
Noyakuk	FF019442
Sagoonick	FF000839
Walker	FF087313

Alaska Department of Natural Resources issued permits:

<u>Applicant</u>	<u>Case File Number</u>
Davis	F035186
Hadley	FF085605
Lee	F030165
Olanna	FF011729
Sheldon	FF085604

II. Rationale for the Decision:

Under the authority of the Alaska Livestock Grazing Act (Act of March 4, 1927, 43 U.S.C. 316, 316a–316o), I have decided to lease to qualified applicants, listed above, the grazing privileges on the traditional grazing allotments of the Seward Peninsula, for the remainder of 2008.

The Reindeer Grazing Act of 1937 further defined and directed the management of the reindeer industry by the Secretary of the Interior (Title 25, Chapter 14, Subchapter VII, Section 500). The 1937 Reindeer Act prohibited non-Native ownership of reindeer. This Act also declared the reindeer industry as a means of subsistence for the Eskimos and other natives of Alaska. My decision to extend the grazing permit authorizations through 2008 meets this intent and supports the continuance of the reindeer industry on the

Seward Peninsula.

CFR 43, Part 4200, published in the Federal Register September 29, 1998, outlines the Bureau of Land Management application and administrative processes for reindeer grazing in Alaska. With the support, and assistance from Kawerak Reindeer Herders Association, more than half of the Native herders have managed to protect their reindeer from leaving their traditional grazing ranges with the migrating caribou herd. They have been able to sustain viable herds even though the Western Arctic Caribou Herd is the largest in recorded history.

Although the caribou and reindeer utilize the same resources, particularly in the winter on the Seward Peninsula, the overall impacts of the reindeer herds are diminutive. It is reasonable to assume that range health could be adversely impacted through inappropriate grazing practices; however, herders are counseled in range management and reindeer husbandry by the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the University of Alaska, Fairbanks Reindeer Research Program. Lichen cover and range utilization data from monitoring reports is strategically used to minimize overgrazing and maximize range health. Although “safe areas” sometimes experience high utilization and overgrazing, they compromise only a small portion of the total allotment acreage available. Herders recognize the need to use the safe areas only when necessary for protecting their herds from the migrating caribou as well as predation from bears and wolves. Given the immense size of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd right now and it’s influx into the grazing allotment areas of the Seward Peninsula, it is understandable that some of the safe areas are being utilized more than when the caribou numbers were lower. Considering caribou herd population trends, however, I believe the grazing impacts to the safe areas are insignificant in the overall resources and acreage available for grazing on the Seward Peninsula.

The two significant issues with the reindeer grazing program on the Seward Peninsula are 1) Range condition and 2) Impacts to other wildlife – primarily the Western Arctic Caribou Herd. Based on historic and recent monitoring data, as well as the oversight and program coordination with interagency cooperators and partners, I have determined the impacts of these two issues are not significant.

The herders on the Seward Peninsula have been engaged in reindeer herding and husbandry for more than one hundred years and pass their traditional knowledge on from generation to generation. The collaborative strength in the Kawerak Reindeer Herders Association, Inc., gives the reindeer herders the best opportunity and methodology for optimal reindeer industry management. With the scientific and technical support from the University of Alaska Fairbanks Reindeer Research Program, as well as the range management planning and monitoring assistance from both the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the National Park Service, and the Bureau of Land Management, there is no reason to believe the range is being mismanaged.

III. Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI):

The proposed action is consistent with existing national environmental policies and objectives as set forth in Section 101 (a) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). Further and based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment, it is my determination that the proposed action does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment and that an environmental impact statement is not required.

IV. ANILCA Section 810 Compliance:

The proposed action will not significantly restrict Federal subsistence uses, decrease the abundance of federal subsistence resources, alter the distribution of federal subsistence resources, or limit qualified Federal subsistence user access.

V. Adverse Energy Impact Compliance:

This action has been analyzed as required by Washington Office Instruction Memorandum 2002-053 to determine if it will cause an adverse impact on energy development. The action will not have an adverse direct or indirect impact on energy development, production or distribution. The preparation of a Statement of Adverse Energy Impact is not required.

VI. Compliance and Monitoring Plan:

The BLM works in collaboratively with other land managers and reindeer program administrators on the Seward Peninsula to develop a comprehensive range monitoring plan.

_____/S/_____
Mike Zaidlicz
Anchorage Field Manager

____March 21, 2008_____
Date